1: Lowie E-5 (1926) 1939 NT20 Washo NT20

ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTES ON THE WASHO

BY

ROBERT H. LOWIE

I. INTRODUCTION

A SKETCH by Barrett, mainly relating to museum specimens, Kroeber's list of kinship terms, Hudson's notes on games in Culin's monograph, and a few mythological texts by Dangberg constitute our technical sources on the Washo.[1] Several weeks at Minden, Nevada (informant, Dave Cheney), and at Coleville, California (principal informants, Jack Pitts and Bill Cornbread), in 1926 supplied the data here offered.

The Washo (waco, woco), classed either as an isolated stock or as an aberrant Hokan group, ranged about Lake Tahoe (t'i''yeli ta''au), residing in westernmost Nevada and easternmost California. Carson City, Reno, Minden, and Gardnerville, Nevada, fall within ancient Washo territory, as do Truckee, Tallac, and Woodfords, California. According to Barrett, even a small region west of the Sierra, on the headwaters of the Mokelumne, Calaveras, and Stanislaus rivers, falls within the Washo area. Kroeber sets their total number in 1770 at possibly 1500, one-third of the total being in California, where more recent figures indicate approximately 300. But separatism was extreme: Jack Pitts had been to Lake Tahoe a single time, political units hardly embraced more than six or seven families, and only festivals united larger gatherings.

Bill distinguished the Washo about Woodfords and of Antelope Valley as ha'yale'lt'i, those near Minden and Gardnerville being p'a''walu, and the Reno Washo we'lmelt'i. Though distinct, these groups had never waged war with one another. Bill associated the Washo with Mountain House and Bagley Valley but did not consider Antelope Valley ancient Washo territory, rather assigning it to the "Paiute," that is, Paviotso. When about 30, he himself came there, and at that time there were not many Washo in that locality.

Three alien tribes figure prominently: the "Paiute," that is, Paviotso (pa''le.u), whom the Carson Valley Washo sometimes visited near the Walker River; the "Digger," that is, Maidu (teobi'muc), about Placerville and Colfax; and "another kind of Digger" (tannu'), distinct in speech from the Maidu,—presumably Miwok. The two former were definitely noted as periodically hostile, the Washo trying to exclude both from Lake Tahoe. The Maidu often took game away from the Washo, even killing them, and thus precipitated fighting.

[1] S. A. Barrett, The Washo, PMM-B 2:1-52, 1917. Grace Dangberg, Washo Texts, UC-PAAE 22:391-443, 1927. A. L. Kroeber, Handbook of the Indians of California, BAE-B 78:569-573, 944, 1925. S. Culin, Games of the North American Indians, BAE-B 24:199, 265, 322 f., 325, 396, 523, 664, 704, 1907.

[301]

[P. 300 is blank]

1: Lowie E-5 (1926) 1939 NT20 Washo NT20

IV. MATERIAL CULTURE

Economic Life

433 184 114 Barrett has properly stressed the economic differences due to the contrast between a Sierra and a Basin habitat. The following fragmentary notes are corroboratory and supplementary.

262 [171] Acorns (ma'ləq) were associated with California, and even the Antelope Valley people did not live on them to any great degree. However, the Washo prepared a dish called mɛgi"gula by mixing acorns and venison.

222 [462] [413] [251] [252] [415] Pine nuts (t'a"gam) were gathered by men and women coöperatively, the husband knocking ripe ones off the trees with a big hooked pole and the wife gathering them. The women would pick them out, put them in a basket, and let them dry. When dried, the nuts could be kept for about a year; in the spring a pit was made for storage, in the winter they were taken out for consumption. The Washo made a pine-nut "soup," which was eaten with spoons. According to Bill, people went for pine nuts in September.

226 [343] [131] [501] Along the Walker River the Washo constructed many "fish houses,"—a statement that extends their boundaries appreciably toward the east. Trout (a"t'abi) were speared with shafts about seven feet long. Fish were also taken by nets and clubbed to death. Sometimes fifteen were caught in a day. On Lake Tahoe, a group of Washo would go after fish in rafts (see below).

224 [624] [756] Antelope, deer (mendɛ"wi), and jack rabbits were hunted communally, the first-mentioned under the guidance of a dreamer (p. 324). Jack, possibly expressing a local difference, said that deer were hunted by only one or two men and only in the mountains. According to another statement, four or five hunters would mask themselves with deer heads in stalking the game. They would shake up dirt to determine the direction of the wind so as to forestall being scented, thus sneaking up to shooting range. A communal deer hunt was organized in September, when the deer were fat, but not every year. The leader, who did not derive his office from dreams, would say, "Get together, we'll try to kill a few deer." Then the men assembled on the day fixed, bringing their blankets since they were to camp out for about a week. Possibly as many as fifty Washo from Douglas County would travel afoot about thirty miles [484] toward, say, twenty miles from McKinney, California. It took them two days, camping according to their leader's instructions. The next morning, he spoke to them. He remained in the middle, his followers dividing so as to form two arcs of a circle flanking him and finally connecting again. When they sighted deer, they killed up to ten or fifteen a day. The next day, they moved to another spot; and so on, for about a week, thus covering altogether many thousands [482] of acres. At last they stopped and returned, carrying by means of tumplines loads almost too big for them. For deer no corrals were built.

624 224 The communal rabbit hunt was also purely secular. Barrett mentions a hereditary chief for rabbit hunting[*] and all other coöperative hunting and fishing operations. "He it was who notified the people of the arrival of the

[*] *Op. cit.*, 12.

2: Barrett E-5 (no date) 1917 NT20 Washo NT20

101 combined with the peculiar natural environment, has produced a material culture which contains many features of both these areas and which shows certain interesting local adaptations and modifications.

ENVIRONMENT.

131 The Washo territory lies partly on the western margin of the
133 arid, Great Basin region of Nevada, and partly on the more densely wooded eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada. It also extends up into the heavily timbered and well watered high Sierra region and even, in a small area on the headwaters of the Moquelumne, Calaveras, and Stanislaus rivers, reaches down for some distance on the western slope of this range.* Its western limit can, however, in general be stated as the crest of the Sierra Nevada range. Its eastern limit is, generally speaking, the low range between the Carson river and the Walker river drainages. Thus the territory of the Washo lies almost entirely on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada, and extends out into the semi-arid eastern foothills of this range. The accompanying map shows these limits only approximately, as time did not permit a careful investigation of this subject.

133 Within this restricted territory are found two very distinct types of natural environment, each with its typical fauna and flora. The one, that of the semi-desert basin (plate II)[2]; the other, that of the well timbered and well watered Sierra (plate I).[3] The latter tends to produce features characteristic of the eastern part of the California culture area. The semi-arid sands of the eastern part
137 of the Washo territory bear a flora characterized by low brush,
[262] various grasses which yield seeds used for food and, on the desert mountains, by a particular species of pine, the piñon, whose nuts constitute such an important article of food throughout much of the Great Basin culture area. The well watered mountains of the

*See the author's "Geography and Dialects of the Miwok Indians," Univ. Calif. Publ., Am. Arch. Ethn. VI, 347 and map 2, 1908. Also Dixon's "The Northern Maidu," Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., XVII, 135, and pl. XXXVIII, 1905.

2 [The author may be referring to plate I, fig. 2 here, see cat. 116, p. 29 - An.]

3 [See plate I, fig. 1, Cat. 116, P. 29 - An.]

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A WASHO GIRL'S PUBERTY CEREMONY

by WILLENA D. CARTWRIGHT, Denver

881 [121] [115] [361] [131]

This paper describes a Washo girl's puberty dance as told to me by Mrs. Fred R. Brengle of Denver, Colorado. Mrs. Brengle, who referred to the puberty ceremony she witnessed as the 'fire dance,' is a white woman, and was at the time of the ceremony a teacher in Minden, Nevada, a small Washo community of about twenty-four houses, approximately four miles south-west of Gardnerville, which is twenty miles south of Carson City, Nevada. She was a teacher in Minden from the fall of 1929 until the spring of the following year. The dance will be reported just as it was told to me, with relationships, comparisons, and conclusions reserved until the end.

[221]

The dance which she witnessed took place either in December or in January. This was the dance given at the time of the girl's second menstrual period—the dance for her first period had already been given. Mrs. Brengle told me that if the menstrual period came while the people were away from their village, as they are in the fall, when the Washo people go into the woods to gather pine-nuts, the dance was given there or wherever else they might be.

[785]

The girl whose dance she saw was 11- or 12-year-old Teena, one of her pupils at the school. One day, at noon, a friend of Teena's came to Mrs. Brengle to request that she not make Teena eat, because Teena must fast before her dance. Teena did fast for four days, during which time she partook only of sagebrush tea or other plant teas. She did, however, attend school each of the fast days. During these four days the men of the group visited neighbouring communities in order to gather together a crowd for the dance. The people

[574]

of Minden frequently went to other villages to attend dances. Mrs. Brengle reported that it was always a matter of speculation for the people of the community as to which of the young girls would be the next to have the puberty dance.

881 252 [415] [42]

The women, in the time before the dance, worked together to prepare the food. They made pine-nut soup, acorn bread, pies, cakes, and they boiled dried rabbits, bought and boiled beef, and cooked potatoes. The pine-nut soup was made in the following manner. The nuts were put into a winnowing basket with applewood or other wood charcoal and roasted. The nuts were then cracked, shelled, and ground into fine flour, using an outcropping of rock and a stone as mortar and pestle. This fine flour was then mixed with cold water—this constitutes pine-nut soup. My informant told me that pine-nuts are eaten in three ways

[846]

—roasted, as soup, or raw. After the birth of a child pine-nuts are eaten by the nursing mother to produce milk.

[462] [222]

In order to make acorn bread, the acorns the people had gathered in nearby California in October were hulled and the hulls saved. For two or three days before the dance the women ground the inside meat, putting the flour in winnowing baskets smaller than those used for pine-nuts. Through a special technique of shaking they separated the flour so that the fine flour in the basket was away from them and the coarser towards them. The coarse would then be ground again. The hulls which had been saved were used to form a drain. These hulls were piled in the shape of a basin about four feet in diameter. This was covered with cheese-cloth. The flour was poured on the cloth to the thickness of about one inch, and then

stick of gum to pieces of yard goods and a loaf of bread. If the family were well-to-do, they bought the gifts themselves. (Teresa's family bought $75.00 worth of gifts.) If the family were poor, others would help them buy gifts. After this Teresa ran to the nearest water and bathed the paint from her body. The nearest water was the Carson River, about three-quarters of a mile away. She went into the water wearing only the breatsbe and breechcloth, though it was the middle of winter and cold.

The territory of the Washo Indians lies almost entirely on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada mountains, and extends out into the semi-arid eastern foothills, partly in the State of California and partly in Nevada. Lake Tahoe, which is on the borderline between the two States, is the centre of the area.

S. A. Barrett[1] states that the Washo Indians form either an aberrant Hokan group or a distinct linguistic family with cultural relationships to the California tribes Maidu and Miwok to the west, and the Great Basin Shoshonean tribes Paiute and Shoshone to the east. The relationship to the California area tribes appears in the use of the conical slab-dwelling and semi-subterranean ceremonial house; in the boulder mortar, cobblestone pestle, and soap-root metal brush; and in the use of acorn as a food. The relationship is also evident in the prominence of certain types of fine, coiled basketry and in a considerable number of geometric patterns bearing descriptive names. The similarities to the tribes of the Great Basin region to the east are shown by identical foods and in the similar methods employed in securing these foods, especially in that certain nets are used in fishing and rabbit-hunting and that similar methods are employed in handling the *pinon* nut and other vegetable foods. The twined basketry resembles very closely that of the Great Basin cultures, and certain stone implements are also very similar. Barrett also says that the Washo are more closely allied to the Great Basin area than to the California area. He does not mention the puberty ceremony in his publication.

A. L. Kroeber[2] states that the puberty dance for girls was practised, perhaps in a Shoshonean game, since neither the valley Maidu, the hill Miwok, nor the Yokuts give this dance in developed form.

Robert H. Lowie[3] reports that the most important dance was the girls' puberty ceremony, and he says it was still common in the Carson Valley. According to one of his informants, named Jack, 'A girl menstruating for the first time always informs her mother. She is laid on the warm ashes put into a pit, but is allowed to sleep inside the hut. She fasts for four days, but drinks an infusion of sugar-pine leaves. Men must not touch her clothes, or approach her before the puberty dance, lest deer and antelope run away. The fast makes her live longer and keeps her from getting hungry in later life. If she ate, she would die young and would neither grow properly nor get along well. After the four-day period, the father goes around summoning people, who gather for the dance. Weak from fasting, the girl supports herself with a stick . . . about seven feet high, which is planted into the ground. Its wood is light, and the adolescent's mother has painted it red all over. This pole will aid the girl in later life.

'After the ceremony her father takes it far up into the hills, where he plants it in a hole in a rock; and when she is somewhat older her legs will not weaken in climbing a mountain. Henceforth the stick is not touched. Men and women both dance, always at night, and on the fourth night until morning. An attendant dances with the adolescent to support her because of her weakness. A giving away of presents . . . takes place in the girl's honour; various relatives, dancing in the centre of the space, give away money, people being free to come for five or ten cents from the hands of the mother or other kinsfolk. Fires are kept up outside the ring of dancers, who form a closed circle, singing at the same time. The song leader was com-

4:Downs E-5 (no date) 1961 MT20 Washo MT20

[P.365, A]
[Introductory, P.vi is blank]

WASHO RELIGION

by

JAMES F. DOWNS

INTRODUCTION

114
131 This paper will devote itself to a description of the religious life of the Washo Indians living in the communities of Sierraville, Loyalton, and Woodfords, in California, and Reno, Carson City, and Dresslerville, Nevada. Smaller numbers are scattered throughout the area which was their aboriginal range, roughly from the southern end of Honey Lake to Antelope Valley and from the divide of the Pinenut Range in Nevada, almost to Placerville, California.

114 A short ethnography by Barrett dealing in large part with material culture, Lowie's Ethnographic Notes, and Stewart's Element Lists constitute almost the only general references on Washo culture. Various other writers have dealt with specialized questions such as linguistics (Kroeber, Jacobsen), peyotism (Siskin, d'Azevedo), and music (Merriam).

161 Most of the statements about the Washo give the im-
114 pression that they have long been on the edge of oblivion (Mooney, Kroeber, etc.), and population estimates have been well under one thousand for the past fifty years. However, I find myself in agreement with d'Azevedo[1] that the Washo are a vigorous and continuing cul-
101 tural entity. My own rather impressionistic estimate of population is that there are perhaps two thousand Indians in the area who consider themselves as Washo and form a part of a viable cultural unit.

114 My own field work was devoted to an attempt to trace the patterns of change among these people since
[115] the entrance of the white man into their area. To this
[114] end I spent a great deal of time with older informants, but my work was not exclusively "salvage ethnography." Many aspects of Washo culture have changed dramatically in the past century; this is particularly true in the area of material culture and subsistence activities.
114 On the other hand, I was impressed by the tenacity of
182 the less material aspects of the culture. The always-difficult-to-define world view or ethos of the Washo, which so clearly separates them from other cultures, is very much an entity expressed in the attitudes and actions of the Washo Indians, whether they are oldsters who can remember many aspects of the "old days" or children who have not yet entered the newly integrated schools of Nevada. This continuity seems most clearly expressed in the area which we subsume under the title "Religion." Almost all Washo, even the youngsters, are familiar with, or at least aware of, Washo mythology, attitudes about ghosts, spirits, medicine, and a number of ritual actions and beliefs which are common elements in Washo life today.

This is not to imply that Washo religious activity has not been affected by the tremendous changes which have taken place in western Nevada and eastern California. I suggest that rather than disappearing under

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[1] W. L. d'Azevedo, basing his opinions on extensive field work in the area, contends that early estimates of Washo population were incorrect and that modern figures based on these estimates are inaccurate. A contemporary estimate, made by a resident journalist in 1861, was somewhat over 3,000.

5:Kroeber E-5 (no date) 1925 NT20 Washo NT20

CHAPTER 38.

THE WASHO.

Affiliations, 569; habitat, 569; numbers, 570; culture, 571; basketry, 571; dress and implements, 572; buildings, 572; religion and society, 573.

AFFILIATIONS.

The Washo have been unduly neglected by students of the Indian. What little is on record concerning them makes it difficult to place them.

Their speech, which is rather easy to an English tongue and pleasant to the ear, is distinctive and very diverse from that of the Shoshonean Mono and Northern Paiute with whom they are in contact and association. Such investigation as has been made—and it has not gone very deep—points to the Washo language as being Hokan and therefore no longer to be regarded as an independent stock. Still the affiliation with other Hokan languages can not be close. The position of the Washo makes this comparative distinctness remarkable. For a detached and quasi-independent little group the Washo are on the wrong side of the Sierra. Diversity is the true Californian habit. The moment the Plateau is entered single dialects stretch for monotonous hundreds of miles, and the basic Shoshonean tongue continues without interruption across the Great Basin and even over the Rockies. Now the Washo are a Basin tribe. Their settlements were all on streams that flow eastward to be lost in the interior desert. Even as the artificial lines of statehood run they are as much a Nevadan as a Californian people. Their anomaly as a separate fragment is therefore in their location.

It is tempting to conjecture, accordingly, and especially on the basis of their probable Hokan kinship, that they are an ancient Californian tribe, which has gradually drifted, or been pressed, over the Sierra. But there are no concrete grounds other than speech to support such an assumption.

HABITAT.

The Washo territory is the upper and more fertile drainage of the Truckee and Carson Rivers—streams born in California mountains to perish in Nevada sinks. How far down they ranged on these

5:Kroeber E-5 (no date)1925 NT20 Washo NT20

two rivers has not been ascertained with accuracy. It seems to have been but a little below Reno and Carson City. Long Valley Creek, which drains northwestward into Honey Lake, a Californian stream, was also in their possession. West of the crest of the Sierra they had no settlements, but the Miwok acknowledged their hunting rights on the upper Stanislaus nearly as far down as the Calaveras Big Trees. They may have enjoyed similar privileges elsewhere. Where there are no winter villages, information is often conflicting: boundaries may have been in dispute, or amicably crossed. If the Washo hunted on the North Stanislaus they may have come down the Middle Fork also, or frequented the Calaveras, Cosumnes, or American. Sierra Valley has been assigned both to them and the northeastern Maidu. The deep snows prevented more than temporary occupation. Honey Lake, too, may have been more largely Washo than the map (Pl. 46) shows, or entirely forbidden to them.

Lake Tahoe is central to Washo territory, and was and is still resorted to in summer, but its shores are scarcely habitable in the season of snow.

The Washo call themselves Washiu or Wasiu. The names applied to them by their neighbors are unknown, except for northern Maidu Tsaisuma or Tsaisū. Northern Miwok Hisatok or Histoko means merely "easterners."

The Washo were at times in conflict with the adjacent Northern Paiute, whom they call Paleu, and by whom they are said to have been defeated about 1860.

NUMBERS.

There are the usual statements, some made as much as 50 years ago, about enormous decrease and degeneration or impending extinction; but actually the Washo seem to have suffered less diminution as a consequence of the invasion of our civilization than the vast majority of California Indians. Estimates of their population were: In 1859, 900; 1866, 500; 1892, 400; 1910, 300. The Federal census in this last year enumerated over 800, about one-third in California and two-thirds in Nevada, some three-fourths or more being full blood. As the Washo are distinctly separated from the "Paiutes" and the "California Diggers" in the local American consciousness, it is not likely that this figure involves any erroneous inclusions of consequence. Their lack of any reservation, and the semiadjustment of their life to civilized conditions, leading to a scattering habitation on the fringes of white settlements, have evidently caused a persistent underestimation of their numbers.

Their original strength may have been double what it is to-day; 1,500 or under seems a likely figure in view of the nature of their country, their solidarity, and their unity of speech.

[this plate has not been processed]
--Analyst

CULTURE.

The customs of the Washo will undoubtedly prove interesting once they are known. Their habitat on the flank of the Sierra Nevada must have made them in the main Californians. But being over the crest of the range, they must have had something of an eastern outlook, and their associations with the Northern Paiute, who maintained direct affiliations with the tribes in the Rocky Mountains, and were apparently subject to at least some indirect influences from the Plains, can hardly but have given the civilization of the Washo some un-Californian color.

BASKETRY.

Their basketry, which is deservedly noted for excellent finish and refinement of decorative treatment, is of the central Californian order, with coiling predominating in fine ware (Pl. 55, *f*), whereas the adjacent Shoshoneans, like most of those of the Great Basin, incline to plain and diagonal twining. The nearest analogues are in Miwok work. Both single and triple rod foundations are employed. The shapes are simple; the designs are characterized by a lack of bulk that is typical also of Miwok patterns, as well as by a delicacy and slenderness of motive to which the Miwok do not attain. The direction of the coil is from left to right, as among the Miwok and Maidu; the edge has the herringbone finish of diagonally crossed sewing, where most California tribes, except sometimes the Miwok, simply wrap the last coil.

A twined and pitched water jar is no doubt due to Shoshonean influence. The conical carrying basket is either of plain-twined wide-spaced openwork of peeled stems, as in northwestern California, or unpeeled like the wood-carrying basket of the Pomo, or diagonally twined in openwork, or closely with a pattern. The nearer Californian tribes use chiefly a narrow mesh filled in by smearing over. Oval and triangular trays, elliptical seed beaters, and the like were of the types common to all the Sierra tribes and the nearer Shoshoneans; with the weave in plain or diagonal twining. The latter technique is in use also for cooking baskets. Three-strand twining is employed for starts and reenforcements.

The almost universal basket material is willow, with fern root (*Pteridium aquilinum*) for the black of patterns, and redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*) for red. The latter material was also used for warp and coiling foundation. It is said to have been imported from west of the Sierras.

Cradles are of the hooded basketry type described among the Yokuts. A band of diagonal bars or crosses—diagonals in two direc-

1/1 [This plate has not been processed--Analyst]

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE WASHO INDIANS

Habitat

At the time of their initial contacts with Whites in the middle 1800's the Washo Indians were located at Lake Tahoe and a surrounding territory in what is now California and Nevada (Nevins 1956; Sieber 1951). Varying degrees of tribal ownership of land, depending on intensity and exclusiveness of use, existed aboriginally. Washo shared residence of Antelope Valley with Northern Paiute families, were closely associated with Miwok and Maidu on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada, and with the Maidu and Northern Paiute in the Honey Lake area. These "peripheral lands" of Washo territory were not considered exclusively Washo, while the "nuclear lands" were vigorously defended by them as such.

The "peripheral lands" include the widest extensions of common travel in subsistence and trading pursuits. The "nuclear lands" include the common winter residence sites and the surrounding highlands.[1] These territorial lines are the result of a synthesis of territorial descriptions by Royce (1896-7), Barrett (1917), Siskin (1938), Stewart (1941), Indian Claims Commission (1959), d'Azevedo (n.d.), and data collected by the present writer. Families undoubtedly traveled and resided beyond these areas on occasion, but their recognized was essentially within their own of the three territorial divisions of Washo territory shown by the map accompanying this text.

The gathering of food and raw materials for manufactures took the Washo on treks into areas claimed by other tribes. They went south to Antelope Valley for salt (ungabi)[2], farther south to Mono Lake for fly larvae (mats¢bab¢shi), down the Carson River to the area of Dayton for red ochre (sawasang) and on farther for fish (atabi), and they traveled down several of the large canyons 20 to 30 miles west of the crest of the Sierra Nevada for acorns (malung) and other plants. These were treks out of the Washo nuclear lands into areas where contacts with other tribes might be frequent and dangerous.

Washo territory was roughly divided into three areas by which the local groups were distinguished. These were called "northerners" (w¢lm¢lti), "easterners" (paiwalu), and "southerners" (hang¢l¢lti) (Merriam 1904, 38; Lowie 1939, 301; and Freed 1954). There was no consistent wintering in the west so that there was no distinct group of "westerners" (tang¢l¢lti).

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1. See map Plate I.
[Facing p. 74, cat. 116 -- Analyst]
2. The values of the orthographic symbols employed here are presented in Appendix A.
[see cat. 116, p. 61 ff. -- Analyst]

A few Northern Paiute and Shoshoni groups did make intensive use of small areas so that their population densities approached or even exceeded that of the Washo tribe. Steward (1938, 47-48) presents the Owens Valley Paiute (2.1 sq. mi. per person) and Shoshoni groups along the Humboldt River (3.3 to 5.2 sq. mi. per person) as examples of high population density for the Great Basin.

In the estimate given above, Kroeber was using a population of 1,000 for the Washo in an area of 6,200 km^2 (2,394 square miles). Earlier, Kroeber (1925, 944) had estimated a population of about 1,500 for the year A.D. 1770. This latter figure is probably closer to the Washo population in the middle 1800's. Furthermore, Washo territory was clearly larger than Kroeber's estimate. The Washo land claim case against the government in 1951 comprised a total of 9,872 square miles. This, in turn, appears to be an overstatement in terms of what is currently meant by aboriginal territory (cf., Indian Claims Commission 1959). The Washo had knowledge and some use of approximately 12,000 square miles in their "nuclear" and "peripheral lands". They made intensive use of less than 2,000 square miles, while their "nuclear" territory comprised about 4,000 square miles. Thus, population and territory figures suggest a density that is high for the Great Basin: 1,500 persons in 4,000 square miles or 2.7 square miles per person.

Physical Type

The published physical description of the Washo Indians consists of a few photographs and a series of anthropometric measurements made by Gifford (1926). These measurements were published in "Californian Anthropometry" along with several other samples. The accuracy of the description of any particular group presented in "Californian Anthropometry" is questionable on the grounds of the small sample sizes. For example, cephalic indices were listed for 48 groups, but 1/2 of these groups consisted of a sample of 8 or less with 10 groups represented by only one individual. The mean sample size for these 48 series with data on cephalic index is 16.3. In spite of its negative aspects, "Californian Anthropometry" is the only primary source on Washo anthropometry.

The physical types found by Gifford for the California Indians are listed below with the criteria that he used. Facial index (FI), nasal index (NI), and cephalic index (CI) should be read as 80 or lower (80-) and 80 or higher (80+). Stature (St) is given in centimeters so that 170 would be equivalent to 5 feet and 7 inches.

In 1942 the average annual income of 40 families at the Dresslerville Colony was $664 (Program of the Carson Agency 1944, 184). Incomes have since increased substantially above the 1942 figure. For example, in the summer of 1961 there were three electricians and a painter that commuted from Dresslerville to Reno every work day.

Washo reside today primarily in small shacks in Dresslerville, Carson City, and Reno, Nevada and in Woodfords and Coleville, California. A large number of Washo have married out of the tribe and live in the communities mentioned above or in other parts of Nevada and California.

The general figures on the causes of deaths among Nevada Indians is probably indicative of certain elements in current Washo life (Haglund, et al. 1961, 43-43c). Non-Indians in Nevada have a higher frequency of deaths due to heart diseases and cancer while the Indians have higher death rates in the categories of violence, vehicle accidents, pneumonia, enteritis, tuberculosis, homicide, and suicide. "In the general accident category... Nevada Indian deaths are almost twice the proportion of that of non-Indians in this state. Homicide as a cause of death is five times greater among Nevada Indians than among Indians in other parts of the continental United States."

The following chronology is presented to give an overview of the important events in the history of Washo territory. Several of the events listed have not been settled by historians and may be only approximately correct as stated here. There is little of an ethnohistorical character to this outline, but it does provide a framework for relating changes in Washo economics to the facts of White contact.

1826 - (possibly 1825) Jedediah S. Smith brought a party of some forty trappers down the Humboldt, to the Walker River, and over Walker's Pass into California. In the same year he recrossed the Sierras passing Mono Lake on the way east (Thompson and West 1881).

1833 - Capt. B. L. E. Bonneville sent a trapping (and spying?) party under Joseph R. Walker into Spanish California by way of Pyramid Lake, up the Truckee River, and over the Sierras. Zenas Leonard wrote a diary of this trip (Nevada 1940, 289).

1841 - Capt. J. B. Bartleson took an emigrant party, with John Bidwell and Col. Joseph B. Chiles along, to the Carson and Walker rivers and over the Sierras into California by way of Sonora Pass (Nevada 1940, 289).

1844 - Col. John C. Fremont and his survey party, with Kit Carson along, passed Pyramid Lake, proceeded south through Carson Valley and on

Mormons recalled to Utah by Brigham Young.

1858 - The Comstock Lode was discovered at Virginia City and in the next two years an estimated 20,000 people came into Washo territory in the "rush to Washoe". 175

The newspaper "Territorial Enterprise" began in Genoa.

The telegraph line reached Genoa from Placerville.

1859 - The Carson Valley Indian Agent, Major J. Dodge (1859) wrote "The Washo Nation number about 900 souls, and inhabit the country along the base of the Sierra Nevada mountains, from Honey Lake on the north, to the west fork of Walker's River on the south. They are divided into three different bands. 'Capt. Jim's' band is located in the vicinity of Carson, Washo, and Eagle Valleys, and Lake Bigler. This band numbers 145 men, 110 women, and 87 children. Total - 342. I have had talk with this band and given them some presents. 'Capt. Jim' is the head of the nation. 175 161 131 175 621 162 622

'Pos-Larke's'band is located in Little Valley between the east and west forks of Carson River, and numbers about the same as Capt. Jims band, 340.

'Deer-Dicks' band lives in and claims Long Valley southeast from Honey Lake, and numbers about 300.

...I would here recommend that a large extent of country be taken up, and all in one body, and to concentrate the whole 'Py-Ute' and 'Wa-Sho' Nations upon it, making one expense do for both. 175

...A few days ago a Wa-Sho died from actual starvation and exposure in the vicinity of Lake Bigler which is situated in the 'Sierra Nevada Mountains,' and another was found dead at the base of those mountains yesterday from the same cause." [165]

The severe winter this year was blamed on the Whites by the Washo. [821]

Commercial fishing began by Whites on Lake Tahoe when the "Fishery" was established on the southeast shore of the lake (Scott 1957). [648]

Isaac L. Roop became the 1st Governor of "Nevada Territory" and J. B. Blake hosted the 1st territorial legislature.

1860 - Battle of Pyramid Lake, involving the Northern Paiute and Whites.

5,000 acres of land under cultivation on the East Fork of the Carson River. 10,000 head of cattle, horses, and hogs were pastured in [648]

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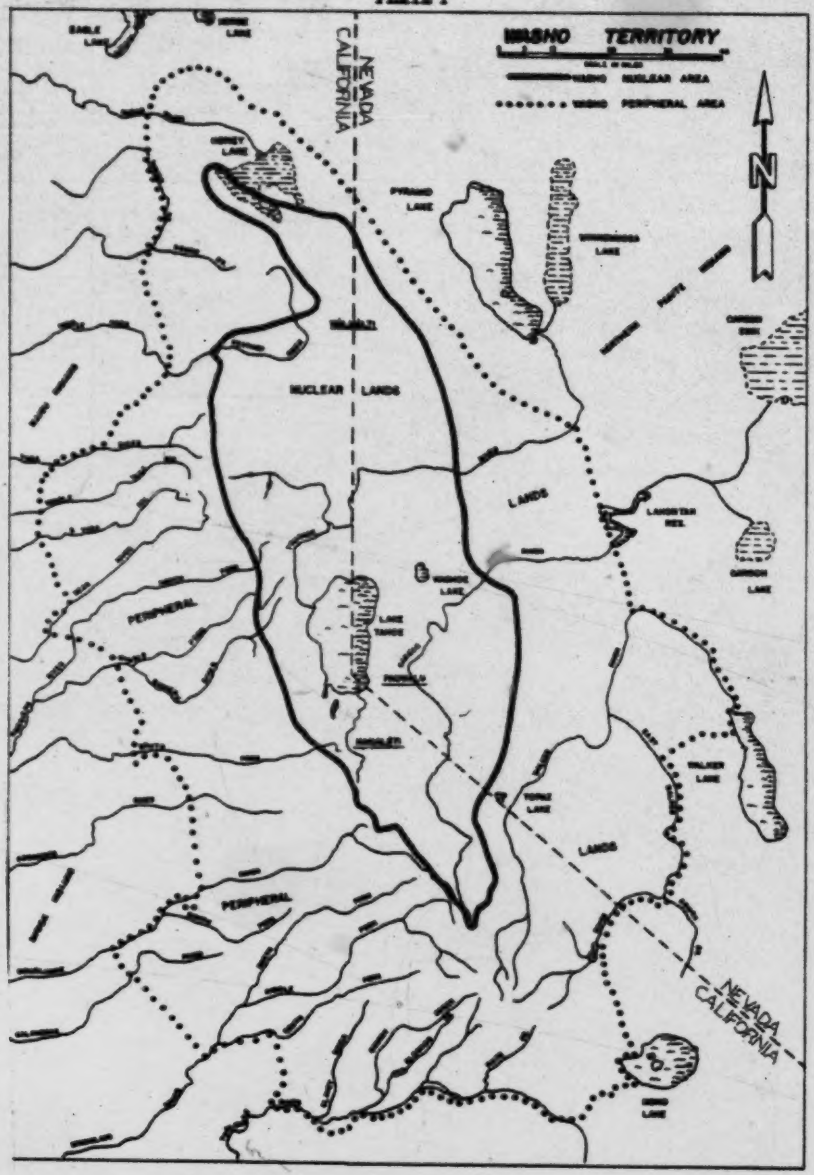
PLATE I



[End Plate I]

T:Freed E-5 (1952-1957)1960 NT20 Washo NT20
[P. 350, A]

I. THE WASHO INDIANS

This chapter is a brief summary of what is known of aboriginal Washo culture, except for social organization, together with the principal changes it has undergone since the coming of the whites. The most significant characteristic of Washo acculturation from the point of view of this study has been the progressive individualization of the society. This can be seen most clearly in their economic life, where the old, coöperative methods of earning a livelihood have given way to individual wage work. The trend toward individualism has also affected ceremonial. The major ceremony of the year, the pine-nut dance, has been given up; and curing is less a group affair than it once was, with the exception of the peyotists, who constitute approximately ten per cent of the tribal membership. Warfare, another activity requiring group coöperation, was abandoned shortly after the coming of the whites. The effects upon social organization of this trend toward individualism will be traced in the following chapters.

INFORMANTS

The sketch of Washo culture which follows is based primarily upon the sources listed below and upon data which I gathered directly in the field. My principal informants were the following: Nancy Emm, Clara Frank, Bertha Holbrook, and Hank Pete, all of Dresslerville, Nevada; Roy James, Woodfords, California; Caesar John, Markleeville, California; and Henry Rupert, Carson City, Nevada.

SOURCES

Ethnographic accounts of the Washo are few. The principal ones are by Barrett (1917), Curtis (1926), and Lowie (1939). Stewart (1944) and Siskin (MS) have contributed two excellent studies of Washo peyotism, and Kroeber (1907) has published a brief sketch of the Washo language, which contains a list of kinship terms. Other major sources are Dangberg's (1927) collection of myths, Kroeber's (1925) brief summary of the then available data on Washo culture, Stewart's (1941) list of cultural elements, and Heizer and Elsasser's (1953) study of the archaeology of the central Sierra Nevada.

LOCATION

The Washo Indians are a small, isolated group who speak a language tentatively placed in the Hokan stock (Sapir, 1929, p. 139). In aboriginal times they occupied the extreme western edge of Nevada and eastern California. The eastern part of their territory lay in the Great Basin and the western part in the Sierra Nevada. Aboriginal Washo territory extended from Honey Lake in the north to Sonora Pass in the south. The eastern boundary ran from Sonora Pass northward along the crest of the Pine Nut Mountains; it then turned west

[P.350, B]

I. THE WASHO INDIANS

passing just west of Virginia City; then north to a point a few miles east of Reno, and from there northwest to Honey Lake. The western boundary followed the crest of the Sierra Nevada. Lake Tahoe and the eastern half of Sierra Valley were in Washo territory, as were the modern towns of Woodfords, Truckee, and Loyalton, California; and Reno, Carson City, Minden, and Gardnerville, Nevada (Barrett, 1917, pp. 5-7; Curtis, 1926, pp. 57, 89; Kroeber, 1925, pp. 569-570; Lowie, 1939, p. 301; Merriam, MS; Siskin, 1938, pp. 626-627; Stewart, 1944, p. 86).

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POPULATION

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Estimates of the aboriginal population vary considerably. Kroeber (1925, p. 570) gives the total in pre-white times at possibly 1,500. Mooney estimates 1,000 Washo in 1845, the date he considers to mark the end of the aboriginal period. Mooney believes that the Washo population had fallen to 300 by 1907 (1928, p. 20). This last figure differs markedly from Curtis' estimate of 800 Washo only three years later in 1910 (1926, p. 91). The Washo tribal secretary, Ronald James, estimates the present-day Washo at 850. Many of them have moved to the cities; probably no more than 600 remain within the boundaries of what was formerly Washo territory.

GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISIONS

619

There are three geographically distinct groups of Washo. Those living north of Carson City, Nevada, are called wélmelti?. Washo living in the Carson Valley are called pá·wa?lu?, and the California Washo are called hánalelti?, with the present California-Nevada border being the approximate dividing line between these last two groups (Simpson, 1876, pp. 93-94; Curtis, 1926, p. 90). I know of no cultural differences between these two groups, but the wélmelti? are said to differ from the other two by their slow manner of speech. In the spring and summer, when the Washo moved up to Lake Tahoe, the wélmelti? camped mainly around the northern half of the lake from McKinney around to Glenbrook. The pá·wa?lu? lived on the western side of the lake south of McKinney, and the southern and eastern lake shore was mixed hánalelti? and pá·wa?lu?. However, any family was free to camp anywhere around the lake.

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SEASONAL MIGRATIONS

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The Washo were migratory hunters, fishers, and gatherers. A family usually spent the winter in the Pine Nut Mountains. In the spring, the able-bodied men and women went to Lake Tahoe to fish. The rest of the family moved into the great valleys east of the Sierra Nevada where they searched for roots, grass seeds, birds, birds' eggs, and berries. From time to time, someone who had gone to the lake would carry

8: Merriam& d'Azevedo E-4, 5 (1954-1955) 1957
NT20 Washo NT20

Washo Peyote Songs

ALAN P. MERRIAM
Northwestern University
AND
WARREN L. D'AZEVEDO
Northwestern University

I

The Washo

THE Washo people of Nevada and California have been described linguistically as a small Hokan-speaking group among the Shoshonean-speaking peoples of the Great Basin (Kroeber 1907; Lowie 1939). They formerly inhabited a relatively abundant territory extending from Honey Lake in the north to Antelope Valley and Sonora Pass in the south, and from the Pinenut Range east of Carson Valley in Nevada to Lake Tahoe and the summit of the Sierra-Nevada Mountains of California in the west. Present population is variously reported at between 400 and 1000 individuals; the figures on file at the Nevada Indian Agency in Stewart, Nevada, support the larger estimates.

The Washo were formerly distributed in small, band-like communities composed of semi-exogamous extended families which made use of the full range of their diversified setting in hunting and gathering, and were thus a highly mobile population. In recent times, however, there has been an increasing tendency to cluster in small colonies in or near the older white settlements of Nevada and California, and on the few remaining allotment acres provided by the government many years ago. The major source of money-income for families is provided by those members who are employed as laborers on road-construction gangs, ranches, and farms. A few women work as servants in the towns and resorts. There is little use of the land for agricultural purposes, while hunting, fishing, and gathering still provide an important part of subsistence. Despite the often drastic conditions of acculturation during the past one hundred years, the Washo have maintained considerable homogeneity as an ethnic and cultural minority.

The Peyotists

Peyotism among the Washo is scarcely more than twenty years old, having been introduced by one Ben Lancaster, a member of the tribe who had learned the ritual and ideology during a long sojourn among eastern and southern tribes. In 1936 he started the proselyting which resulted in the creation of an enthusiastic group of Washo and Paiute adherents during the period 1936–39. By 1940, however, the movement had already become defunct, and meetings were no longer held in Washo territory. Ben Lancaster continued to preside over the embittered and secretive remnants of the cult, which consisted of a handful of loyal Paiute and a very few Washo members. He also erected an

WASHO PREHISTORY: A REVIEW OF RESEARCH

by John A. Price

Anthropological research dealing with the Washo Indians and their aboriginal territory has produced a considerable body of descriptive data, much of it amassed in the past decade. This paper will review that portion of the data pertaining to prehistory in Washo territory. 1/1

Washo territory in the middle 1800's centered on Lake Tahoe in California and Nevada and the areas immediately to the north, east and south. Except for occasional wider ranging for gathering or trade, Washo territory extended from the south shore of Honey Lake south to Sonora Pass and the West Walker River in California. East to west their territory extended from the Pinenut Mountains in Nevada to several miles west of the main crest of the Sierra Nevada in California.

The physical environment of Washo territory is marked by its variety of climate, flora and fauna resulting from the variations in altitude which occur within a comparatively small area. The Sierra Nevada, a great tilted block, rises gradually to the east of the central valley of California from near sea level to peaks over 10,000 ft. in altitude and drops abruptly on its eastern slope in Nevada to around 5,000 ft. in elevation.

The Washo territory is characterized by yellow pine and fir vegetation in the highlands and by pinyon and juniper in the lowlands, ranging through Boreal, Transitional and Upper Sonoran life zones. A humid microthermal climate with 20 to 35 in. of precipitation annually obtains in the mountains while an arid cold-steppe climate is found in the low valleys. In the mountains the summers are warm with rains through July, snows starting in November, and cold weather with freezing nights until April. Snow often reaches more than 15 ft. in depth in some places in the mountains.

There are several estimates of Washo population. Fairfield (1916, 13-14) wrote that "In 1859 Major Dodge, the Indian Agent, reported that they number about 900"; Kroeber (1925, 944) estimated around 1500 for A.D. 1770; Lowie (1939, 301) wrote that "recent figures indicate approximately 300"; and Merriam and d'Azevedo (1957, 615) wrote that "Present population is variously reported at between 400 and 1000 individuals; the figures on file at the Nevada Indian Agency in Stewart, Nevada, support the larger estimates."

1/1 [for an additional note regarding the preparation of this paper, see p. 92 -- Analyst]

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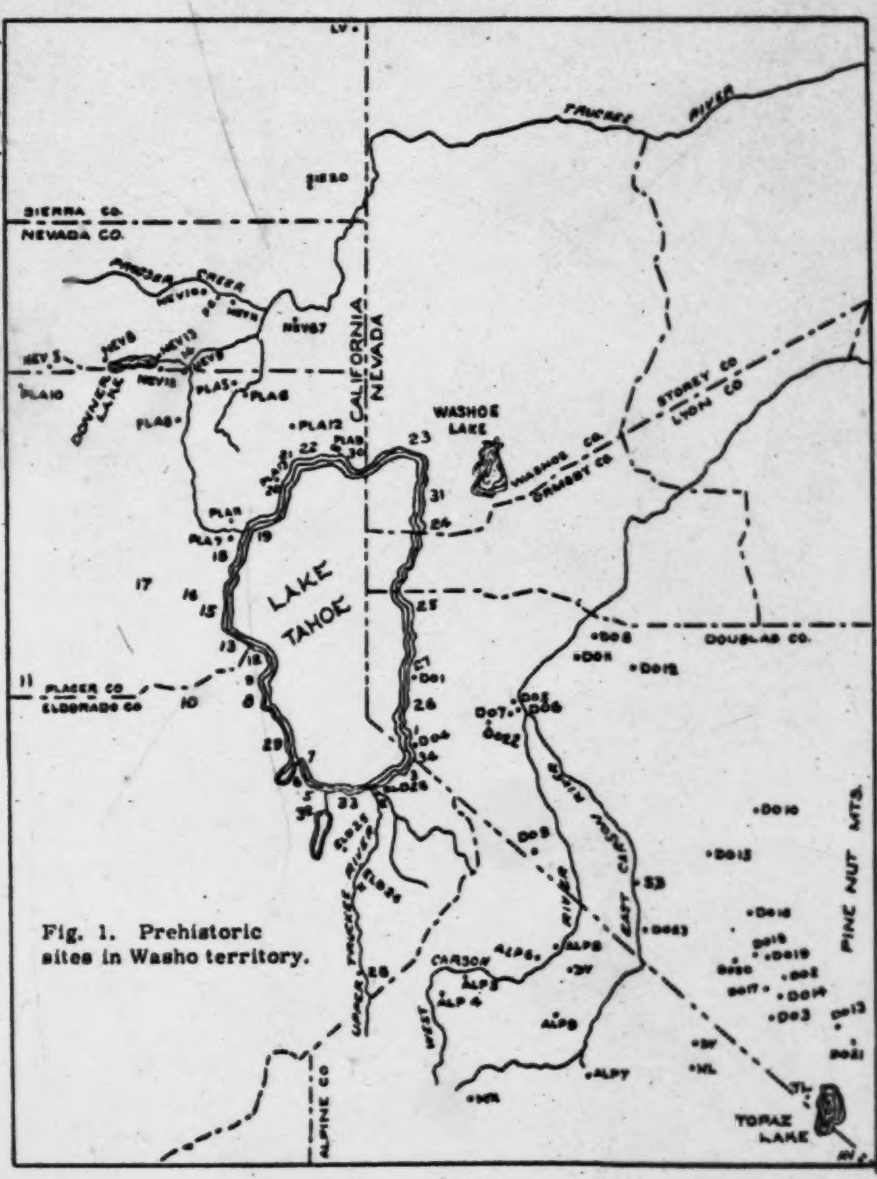

Fig. 1. Prehistoric sites in Washo territory.

"A permanent bedrock mortar was near each camping site . . . portable property was scanty. It was a hard climb from the valley to the lake and the Washo took mainly bows and arrows, a mano and metate, a few necessary baskets and their fish harpoons. . . . The fish were speared from a fish blind. . . . At a suitable place on a stream the Washo would build a stone dam fine enough to catch everything except small minnows."

One thing to note here is that the Washo were stream fishers. They never went out onto the lake with rafts or boats of any kind and they never used a hook and line from the shore.[3] The hook and line is reported for stream fishing, but was not nearly as important as spearing and netting. The balsa boat was used on Washoe Lake to drive young ducks, but was never taken to Lake Tahoe.

The d'Azevedo Survey

In 1955 and 1956 d'Azevedo collected the names and descriptions of 249 habitation sites and geographical locations in the extended territory used by the Washo. Though not published, much of this information has been made available through the files of the California Archaeological Survey at Berkeley, and the present writer has made frequent reference to an unpublished manuscript (d'Azevedo, 1956) containing this material.

The survey is similar to Freed's survey for Lake Tahoe except that it presents a systematic coverage of Washo land-use and knowledge of terrain, rivers, lakes and natural resources over an area of about 13,000 sq. mi. This knowledge is so intricately woven into Washo folklore and mythology that a long tenure in this region is indicated for them. Furthermore, it would appear that the territorial "boundaries" now designated for the Washo ignore large areas in California which they at least shared with the Miwok and Maidu, and areas to the east which were shared with the Paiute.

The Heizer and Elsasser Survey

Heizer and Elsasser (1953) reported on 26 sites in their archeological survey of the high Sierras in the vicinity of Lake Tahoe. Two similar yet distinct archeological complexes were seen in the materials from their survey -- Martis and Kings Beach. The Martis complex type site is Pla-5 in Martis Valley, along Martis Creek, about 5 mi. northwest of Lake Tahoe.

3[footnote appears on p. 93--Analyst]

been the most important single source of food, providing sustenance through the midwinter months when no other plants were available because it grew in large quantity and could be stored for relatively long periods.

A loosely structured bilateral band of family groups appears to have been the most important unit besides the family itself. The membership within a band was apparently very fluid, since families shifted bands or left the company of other families in the pursuit of food. Communal hunts for antelope or rabbits brought several bands together under the special direction of a shaman or rabbit boss. Exceptionally good gathering conditions also concentrated people, but there appears to have been no tendency for larger groupings of gatherers to involve more than a number of separate bands operating in the same area. This is in part because of the nature of gathering -- as opposed to rabbit or antelope hunting -- where cooperation did not necessarily produce more food. Except for these two situations, supraband organization and leadership appear to have been nonexistent. Within the band, leadership was informal and nonauthoritarian. Tribal identity, except for a broad differentiation between Northern Paiute and other Paiute, Shoshoni, Bannock, and Ute and the Washo, as well as the various neighboring California tribes, appears nonexistent at this time. All the Paiute were never assembled for any enterprise, although bands may have assisted each other in war against some common enemy. There appears, however, to have been no real war among the various Paiute bands. Disputes were settled by arguments, fights and skirmishes in which rocks were thrown (Steward, 1938, 238).

The Aboriginal Situation: Washo

The Washo occupied the area between Lake Tahoe and the Pine Nut Mountains east of Reno. The north-south extent of their territory appears to have been from Honey Lake to Antelope Valley. There is archeological evidence as well as the testimony of informants that Washo territory once extended well into California, perhaps to the edge of the San Joaquin Valley (Heizer and Elsasser, 1953; Kroeber, 1925, 391). Linguistically they represent an isolated fragment of the Hokan stock; the Paiute are part of the great Shoshonean stock of wide distribution in the Basin.

Unfortunately the ethnographic information on the Washo is far less complete than is that on the Paiute. However, there is nothing to suggest, in the information on hand, that the Washo differed markedly from the Paiute in subsistence activities, social organization or culture.

N
101 7, Pa, Pakwi-dökadö, "chub eaters," on the S
131 shores of Walker Lake, in Soda Spring Valley, and at Hawthorne, Nevada.

N Informant.—Dan Voorhees (DV), age 66, born at
115 Hawthorne. Father was Toe; mother half Pakwi, half Kutsavi' (Mono Lake). Until DV was 30, he had lived at Hawthorne, then he moved to Schurz, Nevada (Walker River Reservation), where he was Indian policeman until 1935. His sight, hearing, and memory were good and he reads and writes English well. Although he seemed well informed, his information was probably equally true for the Agai (north Walker Lake) as for the Pakwi. He had acted as informant for Dr. C. Hart Merriam. He is the most Europeanized Indian I met. My attempts to interview other Indians at Schurz were fruitless.

W
●131 8, Wa, Washo (non-Paiute). Washo territory
101 was mostly in the Sierra Nevada Mountains surrounding Lake Tahoe. The valleys just at the eastern foot of the mountains—Truckee Meadows, Washo Lake Valley, Carson Valley, and others—served as winter homes. The territory extended from the southwestern shores of Honey Lake in the N to the North Fork of Walker River in the S. Gardnerville, Carson City, and Reno, in Nevada, W are the present Washo centers.

115 Informants.—Charlie Rube, age 76, born near Coleville, California, at the extreme S end of Washo territory; both parents Washo. He lived winters near Minden, Nevada, for many years, spending summers near Bijou, California, on the S end of Lake Tahoe, where I found him. Charlie's faculties seemed normal, but his knowledge of English and of Washo culture was limited.

Susie Rube, age ca. 65, Charlie's wife, acted both as informant and interpreter for Charlie, although she steadfastly refused to talk openly to me. Two other old Washo women "unofficially" participated and on many points the women reached a joint decision before giving me an answer. During the four-day interview, the three old women did not let their conversation interfere with their basketmaking.

Dick Bender, 76 years old; Indian policeman at Carson City for thirty-six years (until he went blind in 1930). Dick was used especially for ethnogeographic data. He lived at Carson.

N
101 9, At, Atsa'kudökwa-tuvimarai, "red-butte
131 dwellers," possessed the Quinn River drainage in northern Nevada; live now on the McDermitt Reservation in the same area.

N Informants.—Pete Snap, or Niso'o (PS), aged
115 ca. 60, half-breed, born at McDermitt. Mother an Atsa; during PS's youth she lived with her parents. PS lived most of his life at McDermitt, where I found him. Physically, he was sound in all respects. Although born after the establishment of Fort McDermitt, PS's family continued their nomadic life until he was about 14, so that he actually experienced much of the old culture. In fact, I consider my Atsa list one of the three best. PS was willing to tell all he knew and he had a very adequate command of English. I spent

14:Stewart E-5 (1936-1938)1944 NR13 Northern Paiute NR13
Washo NT20 ●

NW 102 103 131 ● 133 197 491

Map. 1. Aboriginal linguistic areas and peyotist villages. Numbers indicate sequence of communities receiving peyote.

14:Stewart E-5 (1936-1938)1944 NR13 Northern Paiute NR13
Washo NT20 ●

with the leader, his assistants, everyone seated in the circle, and with one another. Most take their places of the preceding night, lying instead of sitting. The chief talks, jokes, sings, and a few who missed a turn to pray during the meeting ask for special cigarettes in order to pray. Informal smoking and conversation continue. At Mono Lake, Sam Dick had ashes formed into the tail and wings of a bird and everyone danced clockwise around it. Visions are described by some, who ask for interpretations from the chief.

Individuals come and go, but most remain in the meeting place until dinner is announced about noon. Even when all cannot eat at the first serving, spread on the floor of the living quarters, all congregate while the leader, or someone designated by him, prays over the food. These meals are often feasts—acorn bread, pine-nut soup, venison, jack rabbit, and fish supplementing the usual beef, potatoes, bread, coffee, pie, and cake. Unless two or more meetings are to be held consecutively, peyotists start home after dinner.

Map 2. Present location of tribes represented in element list.

Washo NT20

42) Daolulehlehk - means "Fire Makes Red Rock", the name for the eroded bluffs of red colored earth which can be seen from Highway 395 at the Red Rock turn-off. W 103

43) Daogépehm - means "Like a Cut-bank", and is the name for Dog Valley grade where ice water springs are located on the county road. W 103

Harry Wilson, in his interview, tended to proceed geographically from Doyle to a point south and east of the Nevada State Prison in his place names. This is particularly true for items 31 through 40. It was neither possible to get him to be more precise, nor to get him to go to the places physically. For these reasons these geographic places are not more accurately located. He could not give a name for Long Valley or for Long Valley Creek which flows into Honey Lake. 124 W N 114 131

These notes on Northern Washo ethnogeography tend to substantiate the contention of the Honey Lake Paiute that their territory extends to Doyle and that of the Washo begins at Doyle and extends southward. Had Harry Wilson known of Washo villages north of Doyle there is no reason to believe that he would have neglected to mention them. In fact, special interrogation was made at the time to urge him to give any information concerning names for villages and physiographic features in the Honey Lake region. The result was limited to his providing a name for Honey Lake, Hot Springs Mountain, and Fort Sage Mountain, all prominent physiographic features near his home. Village names and locations are conspicuously absent in his presentation. This does not deny the fact that the Washo used portions of the Honey Lake Valley, but it very strongly suggests that their use was with the consent of the Honey Lake Paiute who held title to the region. W [124] N [423] W N [648]